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TAGS: [PREL](#) [TU](#) [CY](#)
SUBJECT: GOT REMAINS COMMITTED TO RENEWED PUSH FOR CYPRUS
COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT

REF: A. ANKARA 338
[1](#)B. ANKARA 410

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: GOT officials reiterated their commitment to push for a new effort to achieve a comprehensive settlement on Cyprus (Ref A) during March 3 meetings with EUR DAS Bryza. Turkey sees 2008 as a "window of opportunity" to make progress in advance of spring 2009 local elections in Turkey and the December 2009 EU deadline for GOT compliance with its Ankara Protocol obligations. The GOT's position regarding the broad outlines of a comprehensive settlement on Cyprus (i.e., a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation comprised of two "constituent states" through a "virgin birth" into a "new" federated state) has not changed. Nor has the Turks' view that new negotiations should take into account the Annan Plan as the culmination of 30 years of negotiations. GOT officials conceded that use of the term "Annan Plan" raises hackles on the island. They were willing to consider alternative language (e.g., "the body of work," with particular emphasis on the most recent phase of talks) to express their belief that a new effort to reach a settlement will not start from scratch. Ankara believes the Ledra Street crossing could be opened "at any time" and merely awaits a push from SRS G Moller. On the NATO/EU impasse, FM Babacan expressed frustration with continued pressure on Turkey to give in on NATO support for EU missions while the ROC takes every opportunity to block Turkish involvement in ESDP. END SUMMARY

2008: A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

[1](#)2. (C) FM Babacan and MFA DU/S for Americas and NE Mediterranean Haydar Berk told DAS Bryza in separate meetings March 3 that Turkey is committed to pressing ahead for new comprehensive settlement talks on Cyprus in 2008. Berk claimed that Ankara had been committed to pushing for a new round of negotiations regardless of who emerged as the victor in the ROC's presidential election. With the emergence of Christofias in Nicosia and a newly elected Justice and Development Party (AKP) government in place in Ankara, GOT officials see 2008 as a "window of opportunity." It hopes the international community will press the UN hard to bring the Greek and Turkish Cypriots together. MFA Deputy Director General for Cyprus and Greece Kerim Uras said that GOT officials fear failure to achieve a settlement during this time frame could cement the growing schism between Cypriots on both sides of the island and increase momentum toward an eventual two-state solution, a result they do not want. Berk noted that Turks will once again go to the polls in 2009, this time for local elections. That, and the EU's December 2009 deadline for Turkey to meet its Ankara Protocol obligations to open ports to Cypriot vessels, will make it

much more difficult to achieve substantial progress in 2009.

13. (C) GOT officials are looking forward to the UN's assessment mission it expects to be led by Under Secretary General for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe. Once that visit is complete, the Turks hope a new Special Representative will be named by Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and will move quickly to push both sides to resume comprehensive settlement talks. Should the Greek Cypriots insist, Ankara is prepared to agree to resume talks under the rubric of the July 8 process, but Berk said any such talks should be seen for what they are -- discussions preparing the way for comprehensive settlement negotiations. As such, they should be conducted in a finite time period, say six to eight weeks, then evolve into full-blown talks on a comprehensive settlement.

DON'T IGNORE OVER 30 YEARS OF NEGOTIATIONS; WE WON'T START FROM SCRATCH

14. (C) Babacan, Berk, and Uras all emphasized the Turkish view that talks must begin on the basis of the Annan Plan. They cannot begin from scratch. DAS Bryza noted the difficulty for Greek Cypriot leaders to agree to resuming talks based on the "Annan Plan," given its overwhelming rejection by Greek Cypriot voters in 2004. "TRNC President" Talat's February 25 letter to UNSYG Ban Ki-Moon with its explicit references to basing new talks on the "UN Comprehensive Settlement Plan of 31 March 2004" had been seen by some in Washington and Brussels as a "cold shower" to the prospect of re-launching comprehensive settlement talks. Berk expressed genuine surprise, then understanding. Ankara would not object to Bryza's suggestion of a new formulation to describe its position that a new round of negotiations must incorporate the progress made over the past 30 years,

and especially the last four years of talks during 2000-2004.

Berk and Uras expressed reservations about referring only to "the body of work" previous negotiations have produced, fearing G/C attempts to pull discussions back to issues previously covered and resolved. Bryza agreed that no one wants to see the progress achieved lost. He thought reference to the "sequential body of work" or "the body of work taking into account the most recent negotiations" or a similar formulation might be more palatable for all.

CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES CAN JUMP START THE PROCESS

15. (C) In an effort to build momentum toward a successful relaunch of comprehensive settlement negotiations, Berk noted the Turkish side is ready to pursue several confidence building measures. The Turkish Cypriots are ready to open the Ledra Street crossing "at any time." They just need UNSRSG Moller to bring together Talat and Christofias to begin that process. Uras noted the Turkish side is also prepared to allow UNFICYP officials to utilize the crossing at Lokmaci, though efforts to patrol or otherwise establish UNFICYP control of the crossing are unacceptable and will remain a Turkish redline. Pointing to the disagreement over demarcation of the border at that crossing, Berk said he saw no reason why agreement to open the crossing could not be made with the proviso that any legal claims by the Greek Cypriot side to the disputed 30-meter wide strip of land between the current and former Turkish Cypriot fortifications would not be prejudiced, but rather deferred until eventual demarcation of the entire border if required. Demarcation had not been an issue at other crossings that have opened. There was no reason it had to be at Lokmaci/Ledra Street either. GOT officials believe, however, G/C authorities continue to raise objections related to such details at Ledra Street because of pressure from G/C business owners who fear low-cost competition from their T/C counterparts on the other side of the green line.

16. (C) GOT officials hope other confidence building measures might be pursued in short order. Uras cited two, including:

-- opening a newly paved road to enable Turkish Cypriots more easily to access the town of Pyla; and

-- opening a new crossing in the west of the island to connect Turkish Cypriot residents in the Kokkina enclave to the remainder of the "TRNC," as well as allow Greek Cypriots in the west of the island to drive directly to Nicosia rather than the more circuitous route currently used.

GREEK CYPRIOTS NEED A CHANGE IN MINDSET

17. (C) Asked how the U.S. could be most helpful in getting comprehensive settlement talks re-started, Uras said it would be useful if we could convince the Greek Cypriots to change their mindset about the need to isolate the Turkish Cypriots in all areas. If the G/C side wants eventually to have a true partner in the north as the country re-unifies, it will have to demonstrate its willingness to work with Turkish Cypriot authorities. The repercussions of the Greek Cypriot policy of isolation is becoming increasingly dangerous on some issues. Berk and Uras pointed to mounting difficulties created by the Greek Cypriots on air traffic control that have endangered the lives of passengers, citing a recent example of an Onur Air flight from Istanbul to Cairo being forced to circle for two hours while airline operations officials were forced to scramble to re-file flight plans with European air traffic control officials to remove reference to Ercan Airport as a potential emergency landing site for the flight. Admitting that claims of T/C economic isolation are perhaps part myth, part reality, Uras said the T/Cs are actually doing increasingly well, which only improves prospects for a possible two-state solution. Uras noted that a change in attitude toward the Turkish Cypriots by the G/C side would show the Greek Cypriots are not trying "to strangle them," and improve prospects for successful comprehensive settlement talks. Berk reiterated that Turkey is prepared to be flexible and has an action plan on Cyprus that will enable the GOT to move quickly to respond favorably to substantive progress on negotiations, to include opening a port to Cypriot shipping.

18. (C) Berk said the GOT is also open to suggestions on other steps it might take to facilitate the process. He urged the United States to consider appointing a special envoy for Cyprus negotiations once the UN assessment mission has been completed. Uras noted the importance of the nature of the appointees to be named by the UNSYG as a new SRSB and by the

Greek Cypriots as their chief negotiator. Both individuals will have to be skilled negotiators who are able to demonstrate flexibility. The Turks prefer a new SRSB who is not a citizen of an EU member state. This would avoid the dangers the GOT sees in the EU becoming somehow directly involved in the negotiations. Uras also pointed to the need for the UN to beef up its office in Nicosia to handle the increased duties when serious negotiations resume.

NATO/EU

19. (C) According to FM Babacan, the NATO/EU impasse is very frustrating for the GOT. Turkey has been uniquely supportive of NATO throughout the Cold War and has supported the U.S. on enlargement and changing NATO. Cyprus is blocking Turkey on EU cooperation, and Turkey is starting to believe there should be a choice: isn't Turkey a long-standing, trusted ally? Compared to Turkey, Cyprus's contribution to security cooperation is minimal. Babacan said Turkey was trying to contribute more to NATO/EU efforts, but is blocked at every corner and was unsure Turkey could compromise. He described NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer's letter on the subject as "unfortunate." Ambassador stressed that we support Turkey's position, are encouraging European capitals to do so as well, and are not asking Turkey to compromise. However, noting the Afghanistan model, he suggested Turkey consider a way that would allow informal policy coordination in support of the Kosovo police mission to proceed while we

tackle the bigger issues. One way forward might be a non-NATO, non-EU "Kosovo contributors" meeting, hosted by Belgium. The U.S. does not want Turkey to be isolated at the March 6 NATO FMs meeting. Babacan said Turkey was ready to be isolated, but appreciated the U.S.'s effort to help chart a way forward (Ref B).

110. (U) DAS Bryza has cleared this message.

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